

COME AND SEE

John 1:35-51

Key Verse: 1:39a

"Come," he replied, "and you will see."

In the last passage John helped us look at Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus takes away our sins through his sacrificial death on the cross. Jesus forgives us and justifies us to be children of God. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts. Jesus brings us into the presence of God and enables us to serve him in holiness and righteousness. It is the most blessed and happy life. Jesus, the Lamb of God, is what all people need most. May God help us to look at Jesus and proclaim Jesus in this new fall semester.

In today's passage we meet the first disciples. They followed Jesus to see who he really was. Jesus welcomed them, saying, "Come and see." When they did so, they found the Messiah. May God help each of us "Come and see," until we meet the Messiah personally.

First, "Come, and you will see" (35-39a).

Look at verse 35. "The next day John was there again with two of his disciples." In addition to baptizing the crowds, John also raised disciples. Of course, John's disciples had repented their sins and received baptism from John. They did their best to live a holy life. Perhaps they learned to eat locusts and wear camel's hair clothing. But they had not received God's forgiveness nor experienced the work of the Holy Spirit. John had done everything he could. But it was mere preparation. Now he sent them to Jesus, the Lamb of God. Look at verse 36. "When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'" Only Jesus, the Lamb of God, can truly solve our sin problem. Only Jesus can forgive our sins and baptize us with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the only mediator between God and men (1 Ti 2:5). John's clear testimony led his disciples to Jesus.

Look at verse 37. "When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus." John's disciples accepted his testimony with simple faith and made an immediate decision to follow Jesus. Their attitude toward the forerunner is really exemplary. They followed the word of God through John with a life commitment. When the word of God led to Jesus, they followed Jesus. Suddenly, without going fishing, Jesus had two disciple candidates who were ready to make a life commitment.

Look at verse 38a. "Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?'" Jesus got right to the point. From the beginning, Jesus wanted them to confess their motive in following him. The gospels reveal that people came to Jesus for many reasons. Some came to be healed of diseases; some to be freed from demon possession. Some came to solve their bread problem. Some came to see a miracle. Of course, Jesus ministered to needy people constantly. But they did not become his disciples. When they received what they wanted, they went away, mostly without saying "thank you."

Jesus asked them, "what do you want?" Jesus did not ask about their human background. He did not survey their strengths and weaknesses, nor identify their skills. But Jesus was deeply concerned about the motive of their hearts. To Jesus, this was everything. We must listen to Jesus' probing question, "What do you want?" We must honestly examine our hearts until our motive in following Jesus is clear to us. Of course, Jesus already knows it. But he wants us to know it clearly.

How did the disciples answer? Look at verse 38b. "They said, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?'" They called Jesus "Rabbi." They accepted Jesus as their teacher based on John's testimony. Now, they wanted to know him better. So they asked for his address. They virtually invited themselves to be his guests. They really wanted to know Jesus better. They wanted to know from their own experience if he were the Messiah. From them we learn the right motive in following Jesus: it is to know Christ personally as the Messiah. This is true for new disciples, as well as seasoned servants of God. For example, after conversion Apostle Paul served Christ with wholehearted devotion for the rest of his life. But he did not say, "I know all about Christ." Rather, after a lifetime of learning Christ, he said in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ." Jesus' disciples must have a burning desire to

know Christ personally. When we do, our Bible study is a personal conversation with Jesus. We can listen carefully to Jesus' words by the help of the Holy Spirit. We can bring the questions that reside in our hearts to Jesus. On the other hand, if we don't study the Bible with a burning desire to know Christ, we can become like Pharisees.

In the last passage, we thought about some men who came to question John. They were not seeking the truth. They just wanted to take back answers to their superiors; they were just surviving. So they failed to come to Christ even though they heard the testimony of John. They were like students who study only to pass a test, and then forget everything after the exam. Jesus' disciples must be different than this. Jesus' disciples must long to know Christ personally as their life goal and direction. In every event and circumstance of life, they must struggle hard to learn more about Jesus. They must be like students who study day and night, sometimes skipping sleep and meals, to master their subject and know everything about it. They do not study to get a grade, but to know the truth. May God help each of us to have such a burning desire to know Christ.

Jesus was happy to see the eager young disciples. Jesus answered, "Come, and you will see." Jesus invited them to come and be with him. Jesus shared his life with them that day. Jesus really wanted to make a relationship with them. Just as the disciples were seeking the Messiah, the Messiah was seeking them. Jesus invites those who want to know him, saying in Revelation 3:20, "Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Jesus is at the door of our hearts knocking, even now. If we just open our hearts he will come in. Jesus said, "Come, and you will see." The words, "you will see" are Jesus' promise of revelation. Simply speaking the disciples would see where he was staying. But more than that, they would see who Jesus really was. Finally, they would see Jesus' real home, the kingdom of God.

Second, "We have found the Messiah" (39b-42).

Verse 39b says, "So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour." After just one day, they made an amazing discovery: Jesus was the Messiah. Look at verse 41. "The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ)."

What then, did it mean to Andrew to confess that Jesus is the Messiah? The Messiah was the central figure promised to come in the Old Testament. He would be a prophet, priest and king. God had told Moses that he would raise up a prophet like him to be a shepherd for his people Israel (Dt 18:15). As Moses delivered the Law to his people, the Messiah would teach God's word of truth to his people with absolute spiritual authority. It was essential for them to listen to him and obey his teaching. As a priest, the Messiah would not offer animals as a sacrifice for sin; he would offer himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He would shed his holy blood to satisfy the demand of sin and pay the price of redemption. Those who accept his sacrifice by faith are forgiven and redeemed from bondage to sin. They become God's children who live in his holy presence. As a king, the Messiah would destroy the enemies of mankind, sin, death and the devil. He would destroy all unrighteousness and establish God's divine rule on earth once again. He would open the way to eternal life in the kingdom of God for all who believe in him. The Messiah is the Savior King sent by God to establish God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

The Messiah was the hope of all Israelite people. To the blind, he was the hope to see. To those in bondage, he was the hope for deliverance. To those suffering in the shadow of death, he was the light of life. Isaiah the prophet said, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). Jesus the Messiah is everything to everyone. He satisfies our deepest need and solves our life problems. To find Jesus the Messiah is to find everything. It is the greatest discovery to any human being.

When Andrew found the Messiah in Jesus, he immediately went to his brother Simon and told him about it. Then Simon came to Jesus. When Jesus saw Simon, he said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas." Jesus knew who Simon was. His name was ordinary; there were thousands of Simons in Israel. His family was ordinary. His life was ordinary; he was a Galilean fisherman. But he had a hidden passion that usually erupted in an embarrassing manner. Jesus knew all about him upon meeting him just once. Yet Jesus had a great hope for him. Jesus gave him a new name Cephas, which means Rock. Jesus saw that Peter would become a pillar of faith for the early Christian church. Jesus saw that Peter would become a great man of God and spread the gospel to the whole world. As Jesus foresaw, this man Simon became Peter the Rock, the great shepherd and history maker.

Here we must realize that Jesus has a plan and purpose for those who follow him as disciples. Jesus does not simply help them realize their human dreams, but he uses them according to his own will and purpose. It is to spread the gospel to the whole world. When we accept Jesus' invitation to come and see, we find out not only who Jesus is and where he lives, but we also discover who we really are in God. We discover the life purpose for which God made us. Frankly, I never imagined to be a Bible messenger and shepherd for the flock of God in the United States and Canada. I was a baseball player, an honor student, and a business major. I was also enslaved by pride and lustful desires. But when Dr. Lee saw me, he said, "You look like a young Billy Graham." I was fatalistic and full of despair because of my sins. But Dr. Lee was full of hope. It was the hope of God. This hope is being realized gradually. It is truly amazing that Jesus sees ordinary sinners with a great hope to use us in his work for the salvation of the whole world.

Third, you shall see heaven open (43-51).

In verses 43-51, Jesus calls two more disciples, Philip and Nathanael. In many ways their calling is similar to that of the first disciples. However, Philip did not come to Jesus. Instead, Jesus went to Philip. Jesus visited Philip first and said, "Follow me." Sometimes Jesus calls disciples among those who are following after him. Sometimes Jesus takes the initiative to call those who are not following after him. Jesus' calling is a divine mystery and his one-sided grace. Jesus calls disciples according to his own will and purpose.

Philip realized that Jesus is the Messiah. Then he found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Philip was indeed a Bible student. He knew the prophecies about the coming Messiah. He accepted Jesus as the Messiah based on the word of God. Then he made a bold declaration to Nathanael.

But Nathanael was not convinced. He said, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" He must have thought that the Messiah would be born in Judea, probably in Bethlehem. Philip did not have a debate with Nathanael. He simply said to him, "Come and see." He was convinced that if Nathanael met Jesus personally he would come to know that Jesus is the Messiah. When we have this kind of simple faith in Jesus we can help others overcome doubt in their hearts. By Philip's faith, Nathanael came to Jesus.

Look at verse 47. "When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.'" Jesus understood Nathanael's inner man. He was a true Israelite who was God-fearing and honest. He was not sneaky and double-minded. Usually people are skeptical of those who appear to be too honest and true. Usually they reserve judgment and trust for several years until they can thoroughly examine their conduct and character. But Jesus knew Nathanael precisely as he was from the very beginning. Nathanael was shocked. He said, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." It seems that Jesus saw Nathanael in his time of secret devotion, perhaps in prayer or while he was writing Daily Bread. In fact, Jesus was the God to whom Nathanael was praying and meditating on. Now Jesus was there in the flesh, out of his love and desire to be with Nathanael. Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Surely, there are many young people like Nathanael in America. They are secretly devoted to God and are waiting for the work and history of God to confront them. They are disciple candidates for the sake of world mission.

Look at verse 50. "Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.'" Jesus accepted Nathanael's confession of faith. But this was not the end of the story. It was just the beginning. Jesus promised that he would see greater things. Look at verse 51. "He then added, 'I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'" When we follow Jesus faithfully, we will see heaven open and we will see Jesus in his glory. This is his promise. Let's accept Jesus' invitation, "Come and see."